

VETERANS AND HUMAN SERVICES LEVY 2008 STRATEGY AREA ANNUAL REPORTS

Activity 1.1

Expand the geographic range of the King County Veterans' Program

Activity 1.2

Increase the capacity of the King County Veterans' Program

OBJECTIVE

The Veterans and Human Services Levy ballot measure that was approved by voters in 2005 directed that half of all levy funds be used to serve veterans, military personnel, and their families. To honor this commitment, this first strategy area provides a range of services specific to veterans' needs. In addition, most of the other levy strategy areas include funds and a number of services targeted to veterans and their families.

Activity 1.1 and Activity 1.2 were designed to expand the geographic range and service capacity of the King County Veterans' Program (KCVP) within the Community Services Division of the Department of Community and Human Services. Levy funds will help increase access to information about services, increase geographic access to services throughout the county, and to link veterans, military members, and their families/dependents to services that will help them to attain and sustain a stable and more successful life.

POPULATION FOCUS

The target population for KCVP services includes veterans, military personnel and their families who may be struggling with a variety of issues such as unstable housing or homelessness, under-employment, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or substance abuse. These include families of men and women who are currently deployed and who, for one reason or another, may not be eligible for federal Veterans Affairs (VA) services, such as National Guard, Reserves and military families.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The KCVP provides a range of services to veterans, military personnel and their families. Services available through KCVP include the following:

- Case Management including an initial client needs assessment, establishment of a case plan targeting homelessness prevention, employment assistance, trauma counseling, mental health and other service referrals.
- Life Stability assistance focuses on maintaining or identifying housing, employment or community resources to stabilize lives and may include financial assistance for those at-risk of becoming indigent.
- Employment Services assistance is available through collaborative relationships with local employers and WorkSource.
- Short Term Housing is available through contractual relationships KCVP has with shelter and transitional housing providers.

In addition, KCVP works collaboratively with a number of community providers to enhance resources available to clients. The most significant KCVP partner is the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA). A WDVA Veterans Benefit Specialist is available on a weekly basis at the Seattle and Renton KCVP offices as well as other offices throughout King County.

The VA Medical Center (VAMC) is also a close partner in KCVP service provision. The Addictions Treatment Center (ATC) staff continues to be accessible for clients and staff alike. The VAMC Homeless Outreach Coordinator is available for consult and VAMC referrals onsite each week, scheduling clients for medical, addiction and psych appointments at the hospital.

Services at KCVP have also been extended to include a rotation of VA Supportive Housing (VASH) case managers every week to increase veterans' access to Section 8 vouchers both in Seattle and King County housing units. This work includes participation in monthly Plymouth Housing Group (PHG) – Simons Apartments case planning meetings involving PHG staff and VAMC social work staff.

PROGRESS DURING 2008

Through Activity 1.1, Levy funds have increased veterans' access to services by expanding the geographic range of the KCVP. During 2007 King County veterans accessed services at the existing Seattle or Renton offices. In 2008, the Auburn Veterans Memorial Center opened and became a satellite office of KCVP. KCVP staff is on hand one day a week at the Auburn site and Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) another day, bringing the total number of days services are available in Auburn to two. In addition, late in 2008 outreach services to veterans or dependents living in rural areas of King County began. Services locations included Enumclaw, North Bend, Maple Valley and Carnation. Planning also began to expand outreach services in 2009 to other locations in the county such as Bothell, Federal Way and Shoreline.

During 2008, a new Outreach Manager position was created, which allowed the program to effectively focus on identifying, contacting and building important community support and relationships throughout King County. This new staff position has allowed the program to provide presentations on veterans' issues and KCVP services to community-based providers, including youth and family serving agencies, mental health/drug and alcohol treatment providers, various veterans' service agencies, ethnic-specific agencies, State Community Services Offices (CSOs), and other related service providers throughout King County.

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The KCVP continued to solidify its collaborative relationships with agencies in the community during 2008. The WDVA continued to be a significant partner. Three contracts for levy-funded services were renewed with WDVA and a new contract was written with them for Veterans Conservation Corps services. In 2008, the KCVP contracted with the WDVA for the following levy-funded services.

- Homeless Prevention Project for clients who are employable or employed in need of food, clothing and/or shelter;
- Veterans Incarcerated Program (VIP) for clients currently in or recently released from KC jails for post release needs and planning;
- Veterans Conservation Corps (VCC) for clients interested in volunteer or green collar career programs, a partnership with Washington State community and technical colleges. Once weekly a Veterans Conservation Corps representative is sited at KCVP' Seattle and Renton to receive referrals.
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Counseling for veterans and their family members who may be suffering from lingering often traumatic effects of military services.

Other agencies KCVP secured contracts with included:

- Salvation Army's William Booth Center to reserve twenty additional emergency shelter beds to provide temporary shelter (90 days or less) for homeless veterans.

- Lutheran Services Compass Center to provide eight additional transitional housing beds to KCVP clients. Transitional housing is offered to eligible veterans as part of a strategy to transition veterans from homelessness to self-sufficiency within 24 months.

During 2008, KCVP completed writing its Policy and Procedure manual governing all of its operations. Staff received training on the new procedures. In addition, given the increase of staff and activities, the Veterans Information System (VIS) was updated to help support the expanding program.

SERVICES PROVIDED

Number Served. As described above, services provided through KCVP include case management, life stability services, employment assistance and short term housing to help eligible veterans, reservists, national guard members and their families in obtaining and/or maintaining housing, employment and living stability. During 2008 more than 2,500 clients were served through the Seattle and Renton offices and the satellite office at the Auburn Veterans Memorial Center. While most clients served were from Seattle, a significant number were from South King County.

Total Served	East	North	Seattle	South	Unknown
2,532	91	60	1,365	620	396

Living Situation. Nearly half of those served by KCVP during 2008 reported that they were homeless, reflecting the fact that veterans are disproportionately likely to be homeless.

Living Situation		
Homeless	1,123	44.4%
Not Homeless	1,409	55.6%

Age Group. Although the KCVP did serve several children of veterans, the primary group served were adults, who ranged in age from 18 to 85 and over.

Age Group		
0 to 5	1	0.0%
6 to 10		
11 to 13		
14 to 17	2	0.1%
18 to 34	216	8.5%
35 to 59	1,733	68.4%
60 to 74	404	16.0%
75 to 84	27	1.1%
85 and over	5	0.2%
Unknown	143	5.6%

Gender. Those served by KCVP were overwhelmingly male.

Gender		
Male	2,347	93.7%
Female	158	6.3%

SUCCESS STORIES

James, a 61-year-old veteran, sought help from the King County Veterans' Program (KCVP) in early 2008, shortly after being released from the Veterans' Administration Medical Center (VAMC) for a mental health problem. James had lost his housing while in the hospital, and was living temporarily in the

VAMC's respite care center, but was worried he would soon be homeless. With only a \$300 disability payment to live on each month, James simply couldn't manage the cost of an apartment.

Staff at the KCVP stepped in to help. They found James a transitional housing unit that he could move into within a month, and then worked with the VAMC to ensure he could remain at the respite care center until his transitional unit was ready. Then they helped James move, paying his move-in expenses and stocking his kitchen with food to get him started.

Next, KCVP staff helped James take steps to stabilize his life for the long term. They helped him engage in therapeutic counseling and enroll in a worker retraining program, and then helped him find part-time work as a driving instructor. James' KCVP social worker counseled him regularly through phone calls and meetings, and helped him plan each step he needed to take. Because James' stay in the transitional housing unit was limited to 18 months, KCVP staff helped him apply for a VAMC Section 8 housing voucher, which will allow him to move to a permanent apartment of his own.

James is thrilled with the changes he's made in his life over the course of just one year: he is no longer at risk of homelessness, he is working and earning money, and he is receiving ongoing counseling to help him stay on track. "I can't thank you enough," he told his KCVP social worker recently. "You've given me back my life."

David is a 38-year-old veteran who came to KCVP for the first time in June 2008. He had just been released from prison after completing a seven-year sentence, and was living in substandard housing and in need of more appropriate housing and employment. After assessment, staff helped David develop a plan to find housing and a job. KCVP paid for David to get a current Washington State ID, issued him bus tickets, and supplied work clothing and boots. Staff also helped him create a new resume, problem-solve his criminal background issues, conduct a job search, and practice interview questions.

David started working for a temporary agency, where he was immediately identified as a hard worker and given full-time hours. Next, KCVP helped him identify, apply for, and move in to a housing unit. KCVP paid the move-in expenses and even provided food to help David get established in his new home while waiting for his first pay check.

David is still working with the temp agency and has promises of permanent employment working as the temp agency's office manager. His housing is stable and he is becoming a leader, offering guidance and support to other ex-offenders transitioning out of incarceration.

Paul is a 54-year-old veteran who started receiving case management services from KCVP in February 2008. Paul had been in respite care through the Veterans Affairs Medical Center following major surgery, and then moved to a shelter. His physical health was still poor, and, as a recovering addict, he was undergoing methadone treatment.

Paul's only income was Social Security Disability. He was on a waiting list for a Section 8 housing voucher, and hoping he would receive a voucher soon, as he could not manage the stress of communal living in the shelter.

KCVP helped Paul get back into treatment services at the VAMC, and then, when he received a housing voucher, paid his moving costs into his new apartment, and provided food and vouchers for needed household items. Paul is now living in his own apartment, keeping up his recovery and maintaining his health.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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